

As we start to use our cameras, one of the first things we all learn is that when using autofocus, you softly press down on the shutter-release button, our camera will get focus and then we press it all the way down to take the photo. For many of us, that is how we use auto-focus and never think twice about it. Back button focusing however, can be an incredibly useful tool for photographers and most cameras today will either have or enable you to assign a button on the back of your camera to focus. But why would you want to do this? What's the benefit of having a separate button to focus with?

I will admit, at first I was skeptical of the back button focusing. Adding a second button to taking a photo just seemed more complicated, it is so easy when just having to press that one button. As I continued my work as a photographer however, I noticed more and more photographers using it so I decided to test it out and never looked back. I have found it to be incredibly useful for a number of reasons and while at times I still use my shutter-release button, majority of the time, I use my back button.

[Here is a tutorial on how to use back button focusing](#)

One of the most useful uses of the back button to focus I have found is when wanting to get a more interesting frame, maybe with a lot of negative space and my camera focuses on the sky opposed to my subject. Now of course you can work around this in a number of ways, moving your focus point or just doing the half press on the shutter button and then reframing but the second you take the photo, you have to adjust your frame again. By using the back button, I can get my focus, continue to hold my back button, adjust my frame, take a photo, adjust again, take another photo, over and over again, all without losing focus.

Another really great use of this is when using continuous autofocus. The ability to have your camera continuing to focus is incredibly useful when shooting sports or any fast moving subject but if each time to go to press the shutter-release button the camera has to focus again, you increase the chance you will miss the focus. By using the back button, you can continuously hold focus even while snapping photos.

Either way, what the back button focusing enables you to do is separate the focusing from the physical act of taking the photo. It gives you time to get focus, adjust your frame, take a photo and still have the same focus without having to focus again. Give it a try and let us know what you think!